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Professor Heather Höpfl, 1948–2014: Eine Gedenkschrift

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This special issue of *Culture and Organization* is a *Gedenkschrift* – a commemorative publication – for our beloved friend and colleague Heather Höpfl, who died on 3 September 2014. Heather was Chair of the Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism from 1995 to 1998 and co-editor with Steve Linstead of *Culture and Organization* from 2002 to 2008. In our call for papers for the issue, we asked for contributions which celebrated, commemorated and continued Heather's profound impact on organization studies. We are delighted to say that the issue therefore contains five original papers and a photo-essay, each of which, in their very different ways, do exactly what we were looking for.

We are even more delighted to say that the first paper in the collection is by Heather herself. It is titled 'A gendered perspective on *Learning to Labour*'. We are extremely grateful to Lindsay Hamilton and Matthew Brannan for locating this paper for us and writing an introduction to it. Using Bourdieu's analysis of class to draw parallels and disconnections between her own experiences, those of the working-class lads upon whom Paul Willis's classic text *Learning to Labour* is based and her research amongst boarding school boys and apprentices in the late 1970s, Heather weaves a characteristically personal and insightful account. She says of her origins in the chemical town of Runcorn in England's North West, and the limited horizons offered to her, that 'I wanted to escape before I too was pulled down into the sedimentary layers of common sense, before I resigned myself to the power of the *habitus*' Höpfl, Hamilton and Brannan (2017).

In an evocative account of how her trajectory took her in a very different direction from the girls she went to school with, Heather describes how she became an 'exotic specimen' (Höpfl et al. 2017) in their eyes, so much so that she concealed much of what she had achieved from them when attending a school reunion in 2007. This leads her to finish on a scathing set of observations about the continuing perniciousness of class

inequality in twenty-first century Britain. Here she is at her lyrical best in an argument which combines longstanding themes in her work including accounts, memory, values, identity, gender, resistance and opposition.

Second is Ilaria Boncori's '*Mission Impossible: a reading of the after-death of the heroine*'. The manuscript explores how the traditional view of a heroine has changed in popular culture; and is also a continuation of conversations between Ilaria and Heather. After a night at the cinema watching *Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation*, Ilaria made some observations regarding the development of gender stereotypes in the movie. As it was no longer possible for Ilaria to visit Heather's office the next day to discuss these, she decided to continue their previous discussions in an article instead, building on Heather's scholarship on the body, gender and identity, and leadership, leaders and leading.

In the article Ilaria analyses heroines in the *Mission: Impossible* series and finds they have changed from being stereotypically sexy side-kicks to the hero to being characters represented by their own virtues who do not need to suppress their feminine selves in order to appear competent. She argues that stereotypical representations of women in popular culture have an impact on how women are viewed in organizational contexts. Ilaria states that 'it is therefore crucial for popular culture to step away from obsolete binary gender stereotypes in order to promote more gender-fluid roles that may in turn positively affect self-inflicted and other-imposed gender stereotypes in social and organizational contexts' Boncori (2017).

Our third paper is 'Heather Höpfl's storytelling' by Alexis Downs, Marja Flory, Rita Durant, Slawomir Magala and David Boje. Echoing Heather's interest in accounts, accounting, memory and remembrance, this contribution to the special issue is very personal. Each author tells a story about an encounter with Heather built around the Bakhtin quote which Marja uses in her section of the paper: 'The I hides in the other and in others, it wants to be only an other for others, to enter completely into the world of others as an other, and to cast from itself the burden of being the only I (I-for-myself) in the world.', cited in Flory et al. (2017). By using this quote Alexis, Marja, Rita, Slawomir and David want to illustrate how Heather was and continues to be very present for her many friends and colleagues. They suggest that Heather, through her sincere and deep interest in others, was living out her contribution to organization theory on the maternal organization and story-telling. A characteristic of Heather's, which the five authors especially emphasize in the paper, is how she nurtured and supported the people she encountered. But they also vividly depict how, in doing this, she challenged the patriarchal relationships that characterize the organization studies academy throughout her career. Alexis, Marja, Rita, Slawomir and David conclude their paper by suggesting that what Heather contributed to organization theory is an understanding that it is not the counting of the cases, nor the measurement of the member's member, rather it is how in the study of any organization, beneath, and before, the obsession with measurement, is an unstated, unspoken, embodied presence. With her narratives, she provoked readers to broaden their horizons and, in addition, enter empathically into the world of experiences different from their own. They very much count themselves amongst these readers, as do we as editors of this issue.

Next up is Jeff Waistell and Bee Scherer's 'Inter-(c)are: Höpfl and Hanh's metaphorical mediation of intercorporeal ethicality'. Here Jeff and Bee develop Heather's work in a new and potentially provocative direction. One of Heather's key contributions was her

consideration of intercorporeal ethics, and she often used notions of spirituality and the metaphysical, especially from her own Roman Catholic background, to develop ideas about ethical engagements that are relevant to organization studies. Jeff and Bee pick up on Heather's central metaphor of the heart and of 'love' and apply it through the Buddhist philosophies of Thich Nhat Hahn, who has been quite influential in bringing Eastern mindfulness practice into the mainstream in European countries. The metaphor of the heart is also used to provide an in-depth discussion of Hahn's Buddhist principles and how they can likewise help us understand our physical interdependence upon each other and the need for us to realize our 'indivisible unity' so that we become more responsible in our care for each other.

In addition, Jeff and Bee offer a critical account of mindfulness that respects its core principles as emerging from Hahn's Buddhism, but also reminds the reader that Hahn's version of Buddhism is linked to social activism ('engagement') to alleviate suffering. Their paper carries on Heather's endeavours to bring more spirituality into organization studies; it provides a unique perspective on embodied ethics that will resonate with present currents in organizational ethics to include embodied and relational perspectives; it uses an evocative metaphor to move organizational practice away from the brain and mind towards the body specifically envisaged as the heart; and it provides critical purchase (emerging from the Buddhist tradition itself) on the current neo-liberal fashion for mindfulness.

The fifth and final original paper is by Amy Fraher, entitled 'Invisibilized dirty work: the multiple realities of US airline pilots'. Speaking to Heather's dirty work scholarship in particular, as well as her research on emotions and her discussions of culture in British Airways in the 1990s, Amy's paper works with interview data gathered from a sample of US pilots. Her central thesis is that, in the wake of 9/11 and significant industry restructuring, these men and women now perceive their work as morally and emotionally dirty, in direct contrast to other depictions of pilots as elite professionals. Company cost-cutting has meant that US pilots work longer hours for less pay and in an environment where their autonomy has decreased significantly. They have lost pride in the job that they do. Airline management are reported as engaging in high levels of 'pilot pushing' whereby pilots are compelled to work even when they are not well enough to do so, and to fly planes which are not properly maintained. If pilots resist, there are repercussions. Their stress levels have risen, as have their levels of fatigue, further compounding the risks associated with badly maintained aircraft and management-enforced presenteeism.

Amy's specific insights here include the identification of what she calls 'invisibilized dirty work'. In existing studies of dirty work, the dirt is static, applied from the outside of the occupation and pre-exists individuals entering the job. For Amy's pilots, however, their once prestigious occupational identity has changed during their working lives because of developments inside the industry, most of which are literally invisible to the flying public. Her paper is also significant because of its focus on the dirty aspects of this (apparently) high status profession, as well as pointing out that invisibilized dirt does not lend itself to strategies of normalization or protecting self-worth as employed by workers in other dirty jobs.

The issue is bookended by the beautiful 'Heather's poetic touch alive in our memory: three photopoems for a photo-essay' by Antonio Strati. As well as being a celebrated scholar of symbolism, aesthetics and organization and the keynote speaker at the 2017

SCOS conference in Rome, Antonio is also a very talented photographer. His photo-essay combines extracts from Heather's work, including her paper 'Frame' which was published in *Culture and Organization* in 2006, with three of his photographs. We think it represents a very fitting finale to our *Gedenkschrift*, given Heather's significant contributions to organization studies understood via aesthetics and art as well as her championing of artistic, literary, visual and ethnographic methodologies in our discipline.

Sincere thanks are due to all of the authors whose work makes up this *Gedenkschrift* for their patience in coping with a somewhat truncated review process (and the need to turn revisions round very rapidly as a result), as well as to the reviewers whose careful and constructive comments assisted us in our deliberations.

Before closing, we want to send our love and fondest wishes to Harro, Heather's husband, and Max, her son. Heather's older son George died tragically in February 2016. This issue is also dedicated to his memory.

And finally, Heather, you are always in our hearts. You did so much for us personally and intellectually, and we miss you every day.

References

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